

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 122203Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2257
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIN PINT ELAB SHUM PEPR IT UR VE
SUBJECT: THIS WEEK IN VENEZUELA

REF: CARACAS 4164 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRIVATE POLL GIVES AD'S PINERUA THE EDGE.
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PROBLEMS: TEACHERS STRIKES AND
POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS. NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY
PROFESSIONALS IN LABOR DISPUTE HINT AT PAYOFF SCANDAL.
VENEZUELAN CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY CONCLUDES. OIL
PRODUCTION UP AGAIN. MORO SHOOTING PROVOKES EMOTIONAL
PUBLIC REACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. OPINION POLL LEAKS TO PUBLIC - PINERUA MOVES INTO THE LEAD.
THE RESULTS OF A MARCH 1978 NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF CAMPAIGN
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PREFERENCES BY DATOS (A REPUTABLE PUBLIC OPINIONFIRM)
LEADED THIS WEEK. IT SHOWED AD CANDIDATE PINERUA ORDAZ
LEADING COPEI CONTENDER HERRERA CAMPINS 28 PERCENT TO
26 PERCENT. (AT THE END OF 1977, BY CONTRAST,
THE SAME POLL HAD HERRERA LEADING PINERUA 27 PERCENT TO
22 PERCENT). MORE DAMAGING, A REGIONAL BREAKDOWN SHOWED
THAT PINERUA IS NOW LEADING HERRERA IN THE ANDES, LONG

COPEYANO TERRITORY GENERALLY ASSUMED TO BE SAFELY IN THE HERRERA CAMP. THE MEDIA OBSERVED THAT PEREZ' STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PINERUA ANHHS PRESIDENT'S OWN POPULARITY IN HIS HOME REGION MAY ACCOUNT IN PART FOR PINERUA'S GOOD SHOWING. FURTHER, IN ZULIA, A COPEYANO BASTION SINCE 1968, PINERUA'S POPULARITY INCREASED FROM 18 PERCENT IN DECEMBER TO 31 PERCENT IN MARCH (HERRERA WENT FROM 36 PERCENT TO 34 PERCENT IN THE SAME PERIOD.)

A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE POLL RESULTS LEADED, BUT LONG AFTER THEY WERE KNOWN TO COPEI, ACTING COPEI PRESIDENT GODOFREDO GONZALEZ STATED THAT AD WOULD NOT BE ABOVE BRIBING POLLING FIRMS TO ALTER THE OUTCOME OF THEIR SURVEYS, A STATEMENT WHICH NOT ONLY BROUGHT A SHARP RETORT FROM AD MBUT WHICH ALMOST ALL POLITICAL COMMENTATORS CONSIDERED NOT ONLY MALADROIT BUT ALSO AN OPEN ADMISSIONS OF COPEI CONCERN. DIEGO'S ARRIA'S POPULARITY WAS NOT MEASURED BY THE SURVEY SINCE HE HAD NOT YET ANNOUNCED HIS INDEPENDENT CANDIDACY, BUT HE COULD TAKE COLD COMFORT FROM THE SURVEY RESULTS WHICH SHOWED THAT OF THE 22 PERCENT WHICH REMAINS UNDECIDED, ONLY 6 PERCENT REJECT TRADITIONAL PARTY CANDIDATES. COMMENT: COPEI IS CONCERNED. WHILE THEY REALIZED THAT ONCE AD GOT ITS CAMPAIGN ROLLING HERRERA'S EARLY LEAD MIGHT FADE, THE MARCH SURVEY DOES NOT EVEN REFLECT THE MASSIVE NATIONWIDE AD RALLIES OF APRIL WHICH GAVE FURTHER IMPETUS TO THE AD CAMPAIGN (CARACAS 4074). SIMPLY PUT, HERRERA HAS TRIED BEING ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE WITHOUT SUCCESS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE, A MIDDLE-CLASS PROFESSIONAL, HAS RESORTED TO COMMON (ALMOST VULGAR) LANGUAGE IN HIS CAMPAIGN DISCOURSES, TITILLATED THE CROWDS BUT TURNED OFF THE MEDIA-VIEWERS AND THE PRESS. (IN FACT, LAST WEEK, AD RAN AN EFFECTIVE AD WHICH CONSISTED OF NOTHING BUT PRESS CLIPPING OF CAMPAIGN COVERAGE, HERRERA'S ON ONE PAGE ATTACKING PINERUA, AND PINERUA'S ON THE FACING PAGE DESCRIBING HOW HE PROPOSED TO GOVERN. THE SIMPLE CAPTION "A SERIOUS CANDIDATE". FURTHER, THE ISSUE OF CORRUPTION CONTINUED TO BOIL, WITH FORMER COPEI SENATOR PEROZO PUBLISHING A FULL-PAGE AD DESCRIBING IN DETAIL (NAMES AND FIGURES) HOW IN 1973 HE ATTEMPTED TO BRING GROSS FINANCIAL CORRUPTION TO PRESIDENT CALDERA'S ATTENTION WITHOUT SUCCESS. PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT, TO DATE COPEI HAS NAMED ONLY 9 OUT OF 23 STATE CAMPAIGN LEADERS, AS COPEYANOS JOCKEY FOR THE SPOILS THAT MAY NEVER BE THEIRS. NONE OF THIS MEANS THE CAMPAIGN IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, BUT COPEI HAS RECEIVED A MESSAGE. ALLEGEDLY IT IS NOW REORIENTING ITS CAMPAIGN MATERIALS TO STRESS THE CANDIDATE MORE, AND THE OPPOSITION LESS. IT MAY ALSO DECIDE TO PROMOTE PARTY PROGRAMS RATHER THAN SEALOUSLY DEFENDING THE CALDERA ADMINISTRATION. ONE PERIODICAL PUT IT WELL THIS

WEEK, SAYING IT'S HIGH TIME COPEI STARTED TALKING ABOUT
HERRERA AND HIS PROGRAMS RATHER THAN DWELLING ON THE EVILS
OF AD AND HOW WELL CALDERA DID YEARS AGO. END COMMENT.

2. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PROBLEMS: TEACHER STRIKES AND
POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS.
NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATION OF
PROFESSORS OF INSTITUTES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES (FAPICUV)
(CARACAS 3748) BROKE DOWN MAY 5 WITH NO IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION
IN SIGHT. THE GOV REFUSED TO IMPROVE ON THE 20 PERCENT
SALARY INCREASE OFFER IT MADE PRIOR TO THE TWO-WEEK

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R 122203Z MAY 78
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SUSPENSION OF FAPICUV'S STRIKE IN 23 HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS. CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION SURROUNDS THE ACTIONS
TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING THE BREAKDOWN ALTHOUGH FAPICUV HAS
ANNOUNCED PLANS TO RESUME THE STRIKE. JOSE VARGAS, PRESIDENT
OF THE CONFEDERATION OF VENEZUELAN WORKERS (CTV), WHICH
ARRANGED THE TRUCE AND THE RESUMED NEGOTIATIONS, HAS
ISSUED A SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT STATEMENT CRITICIZING THE GOV'S
LACK OF FLEXIBILITY BUT ALSO QUESTIONING THE USE OF THE
STRIKE TACTIC BY FAPICUV WHICH IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE
CTV. AT LEAST TWO AFFILIATES OF FAPIVUC HAVE RESUMED THE
STRIKE AND A SISTER TEACHER'S FEDERATION, THE COLLEGE OF

PROFESSORS, HAS ANNOUNCED A ONE-DAY SYMPATH WORK STOPPAGE IN SEVEN STATES OF VENEZUELA TO BE FOLLOWED BY SUBSEQUENT STOPPAGES ELSEWHERE. HOWEVER, APPARENTLY NEITHER THE NATIONAL INTER-UNION COMMAND SET UP TO COORDINATE TEACHER ASSOCIATION SUPPORT TO FAPICUV NOR FAPICUV ITSELF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAVE DEVELOPED A COHERENT STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH THE IMPASSE. MEANWHILE, APPROXIMATELY 150,000 STUDENTS IN THE INSTITUTIONS ORGANIZED BY FAPICUV HAVE NO ASSURANCE THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FINISH THEIR ACADEMIC YEAR.

AN UNRELATED STRIKE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS EMPLOYED BY ZULIA STATE CONTINUES IN ITS TENTH DAY AND THREATENS TO SPREAD TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE NATIONAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. ELSEWHERE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR, EX-MINISTER OF EDUCATION LUIS PENALVER RESIGNED AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY APRIL 26.

PENALVER WAS HAVING A RUNNING DISPUTE WITH EDUCATION MINISTER SILVA AND, WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF A SILVA SUPPORTER TO THE UNIVERSITY BOARD, CHOSE TO RESIGN CITING THE APPOINTEE'S "EXTREMIST" VIEWS AND LACK OF QUALIFICATIONS. TWO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD JOINED PENALVER'S WALKOUT. SILVA DEFENDED HIS CHOICE AND, NOT UNRELATED, THE MINISTRY ANNOUNCED AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNIVERSITIES' FINANCES. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT'S UNCOMPROMISING POSITION ON THE QUESTION OF INCREASED SALARIES FOR FAPICUV MEMBERS IS SURPRISING IN AN ELECTION YEAR WHEN ANY PROLONGED CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS COULD HAVE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE AD PARTY. THE ONLY EXPLANATION AVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT IS THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ IS SERIOUS IN HOLDING THE LINE ON HIS RECENT BUDGET CUTS. FURTHERMORE, THE TEACHER'S DEMONSTRATED INEXPERIENCE IN NEGOTIATING MAY HAVE PROMPTED THE GOVERNMENT TO BELIEVE IT CAN CONTAIN THE PROBLEM PARTICULARLY SINCE THE LAW FORBIDS STRIKES BY PUBLIC SERVANTS. THE STRIKE AND UNIVERSITY PROBLEMS ARE ONLY THE LATEST IN A LONG SERIES OF DIFFICULTIES IN VENEZUELAN EDUCATION. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO STUDENT RIOTS HIGHLIGHTED THE SYSTEM'S ENDEMIC PROBLEMS OF LACK OF SPACE FOR STUDENTS, AND A RANGE OF OTHER ILLS. FURTHER STUDENT PROTESTS MAY OCCUR AS THE CAMPAIGN PROGRESSES. END COMMENT.

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3. NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY ENGINEERS PROTEST POLITICAL APPOINTMENT.
THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW DEVELOPMENT MANAGER FROM OUTSIDE

NATIONAL TELEPHONE COMPANY (CANTV) RANKS HAS ANGERED COMPANY PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR MILITANCY HAS LEAD TO THEIR DISMISSAL. THE WORKERS BELONG TO A LEFTIST-DOMINATED UNION WHICH HAS BEEN HIGHLY VOCAL IN THEIR DEFENSE. A NUMBER OF RELATED UNIONS HAVE LENT SUPPORT BUT SEVERAL STILL ARE ON THE FENCE. THE RECENT PLANS OF THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY TO SCRAP ORIGINAL PLANS FOR ELECTRO-MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT AND TO PURCHASE ADVANCED ELECTRONIC GEAR CLASHED WITH THE VIEWS OF A MINORITY OF CANTV'S ENGINEERS. WESTERN ELECTRIC HAS WOODED THE MINISTRY, NUDGING ASIDE ANOTHER FIRM WELL ESTABLISHED HERE. A RECENT REQUEST FOR BIDS FOR THE \$150 MILLION MODERNIZATION SCHEME WAS ABORTED BUT A WELL-PLACED SOURCE INDICATES THAT A FEW FIRMS (NIPPON, HITACHI, ERICSSON, ITT, WESTERN ELECTRIC) WILL AGAIN SUBMIT PRIVATE BIDS IN A GOV EFFORT TO AWARD THE CONTRACT BEFORE THE DECEMBER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. ONE TIE BETWEEN THE LABOR DISPUTE AND THE MODERNIZATION PLAN APPEARS TO BE THE CANTV PRESIDENT'S REPORTED OPEN PREFERENCE FOR WESTERN ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT AND THE ALLEGED PRIOR CONNECTION OF HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND OF THE RECENTLY APPOINTED DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, A STRONG AD PARTISAN, WITH THE COMPANY. THE COMPETING PROFESSIONALS OPPOSE A CHOICE FROM OUTSIDE CANTV, THE TAIN OF POLITICAL PATRONAGE, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS. COMMENT: THE GOV WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO MOVE AHEAD QUICKLY WITH THE MODERNIZATION. IT MAY BACK OFF, HOWEVER, IF THE CONFRONTATION BECOMES ANY MORE HEATED. END COMMENT.

4. VENEZUELAN CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWS CONCLUDES.
A VENEZUELAN CONFERENCE ON THE JEWISH MINORITY IN THE SOVIET

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R 122203Z MAY 78
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UNION CONCLUDED MAY 7 IN CARACAS. AMONG PARTICIPANTS WERE CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST BAYARD RUSTIN, AND NOBEL PRIZE SCIENTIST POLYKARP KUSH. AFTER THREE DAYS OF SEMINARS AND DISCUSSIONS, THE CONFERENCE CONCLUDED WITH A LENGTHY RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RESTORATION OF RIGHTS GUARANTEED BY THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION TO SOVIET JEWS. IT ALSO CALLED FOR THE RELEASE OF JEWS IMPRISONED FOR ATTEMPTING TO PRESERVE THEIR CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE AND EXHORTED THE SOVIET UNION TO PERMIT EMIGRATION AS GUARANTEED IN THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS AND THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT. FINALLY, THE RESOLUTION DENOUNCED THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS IN THE CASE OF SOVIET DISSIDENT ANATOLY SCHARANSKY.

5. OIL PRODUCTION UP AGAIN.

OIL PRODUCTION REACHED ITS HIGHEST LEVEL FOR THE YEAR TO DATE, AVERAGING 2.4 MILLION BARRELS PER DAY FOR THE WEEK
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ENDING MAY 3. AS A RESULT, THE AVERAGE FOR THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 1978 HAS NOW REACHED 1.93 MILLION B/D. WHILE OFFICIAL EXPORT DATA IS NOT AVAILABLE, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT CURRENT PRODUCTION IS GOING DIRECTLY INTO EXPORT MARKETS OR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. STOCKS ARE LOW, AND APPARENTLY ARE NOT BEING REBUILT.

6. MORO ASSASSINATION ANGERS AND SADDENS VENEZUELAN PUBLIC. THE RECENT SHOOTING DEATH OF ITALIAN EX-PRIME MINISTER ALDO MORO WAS DEEPLY FELT THROUGHOUT VENEZUELA AS PROMINENT PUBLIC FIGURES GAVE VOICE TO A NATIONAL FEELING OF INDIGNATION AND SORROW. SPOKESMEN FOR ALL THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES CONDEMNED THE MURDER AND THE GOV PROCLAIMED THREE DAYS OF NATIONAL MOURNING. IN PARTICULAR EX-PRESIDENT CALDERA, LEADER OF COPEI, VENEZUELA'S CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, CABLED MESSAGES OF CONDOLENCE AND SOLIDARITY TO MRS MORO AND ITALIAN CD PARTY PRESIDENT ZACAGNINI FROM COSTA RICA WHERE CALDERA WAS ATTENDING INAUGURATION CEREMONIES FOR PRESIDENT CARAZO (ALSO A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT). BUSINESS, LABOR AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS ALSO MADE PUBLIC DECLARATIONS OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE ITALIAN PEOPLE. PRESIDENT PEREZ, IN A LETTER TO ITALIAN PRESIDENT LEONE, LAID PART OF THE BLAME FOR SUCH TERRORIST ACTS ON "DESPOTIC

REGIMES" WHICH PROVIDE PROTECTION AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND LOGISTIC ASSISTANCE TO TERRORIST GROUPS. IN MAKING THIS CONNECTION, PEREZ MADE REFERENCE TO HIS UN STATEMENT OF NOVEMBER 16, 1976 IN WHICH HE CALLED FOR A WORLDWIDE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM AND A RECOGNIZED COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS BY URGING THE APPOINTMENT OF A UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

7. OTHER REPORTING THIS WEEK INCLUDED THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY -MIDDLE EAST ISSUE, AGENDA ITTEL 3,10 (CARACAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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4190), GOV CANDIDATE FOR DIRECTOR OF PAN AMERICAN OFFICE OF SANITATION (CARACAS 4218), STANDARDIZED LANGUAGE FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAM AGREEMENTS WITH VENEZUELA (CARACAS 4227), APPOINTMENT OF GUYANESE AMBASSADOR TO EEC (CARACAS 4228), BACKSTOPPING OUR ARMS RESTRAINT INITIATIVE (CARACAS 4262), ENERGY TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION WITH VENEZUELA --ENERGY SYSTEMS ANALYSIS (CARACAS 4152), VENEZUELAN IMPORT RESTRICTIONS (CARACAS 4150), THE CENTRAL BANK RESERVES AT LOWEST POINT IN TWO YEARS (CARACAS 4279), AND JOINT US, CANADIAN, FRG APPROACH TO GOV ON ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS (CARACAS 4323).

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